

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
 INTERVIEW WITH COKIE ROBERTS ON ABC-TV PROGRAM, "NIGHTLINE"
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battalion level. So, yes, that may be the case, but we don't think we'll know for another day or two whether this is a serious withdrawal.

MS. ROBERTS: And during that time, U.S. troops will pour in.

SEC. PERRY: We are continuing the deployment just as we had it planned. We will base our decision to stop the deployment or to reverse the deployment only on the basis of the facts on the ground, the removal of the threat, not on the basis of any promises.

MS. ROBERTS: If a sizable force of Iraqis stays there or doesn't go far enough away to please you or whatever, what then? Do you just leave American troops in the region for months and months and months? Absent an invasion, what do you do with U.S. troops?

SEC. PERRY: No, we will not leave a large number of U.S. troops there for a long time. The purpose of the troops there is to be the leverage to resolve this crisis. And we will resolve the crisis, and resolve it in a relatively short amount of time. And if that requires the use of military power, we're prepared to use it.

MS. ROBERTS: But does that mean a pre-emptive strike? Does that mean if the troops stay there that we just go on across the border and --

SEC. PERRY: That's one of the military options open to us; exactly. And we have prepared contingency plans to do that if that turns out to be the appropriate course of action.

MS. ROBERTS: And what would be the effect of that with the coalition? First of all, is that something you'd have to go back to the U.N. to get permission to do?

SEC. PERRY: We will be working -- we are working with the coalition at this time. And the coalition is working under a broad mandate from the U.N. The U.N. has a resolution that calls on Iraq not to conduct provocative or hostile actions in the region. We consider this clearly a provocative and hostile action, and therefore the coalition has formed to try to deal with that problem.

MS. ROBERTS: There have been reports that France and Russia particularly have been getting itchy about the sanctions and feeling that they were too harsh and too long. Is there any movement away from complete solidarity in this situation?

SEC. PERRY: I want to be very clear, Cokie, to distinguish between the military action which the Iraqis have taken, to which we are responding with our military action. We see that as

COKIE ROBERTS: Joining us now from our Washington bureau, U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry, who spent part of this day meeting with the president on the Iraqi crisis.

Thank you for coming, Mr. Secretary.

SEC. PERRY: Glad to be here, Cokie.

MS. ROBERTS: Can you just bring us up to date since the president spoke to the country at 8:00 eastern time? Have we learned more? Are there any signs of withdrawal of the Iraqi troops from the Kuwaiti border?

SEC. PERRY: There are no signs of withdrawal at this time, but we were really not expecting any. It's nighttime in the Mideast now. Iraqi troops typically don't move at night. We will be looking very closely tomorrow morning, tomorrow afternoon, for those signs.

MS. ROBERTS: There was one anonymous administration official who was quoted saying that rather than troops pulling back that there were more troops moving into the region. Is that something that you can confirm?

SEC. PERRY: There have been troops moving in during the day. This was before the announcement. There might even have been some after the announcement, but that would not be too surprising. It sometimes takes a while for a decision made at the top headquarters to get down to the

a very separate issue from the sanctions. The way of dealing with the sanctions is for the Iraqis to comply with the U.N. resolutions. That's a very different issue, and we keep them quite separate.

MS. ROBERTS: And do the French and Russians keep them separate, or are they interested in saying to us, "Wait, don't be so hasty"?

SEC. PERRY: I believe you will see that the French in particular will support the -- be a part of the coalition and support the action the United States has taken. I believe that they also consider that this Iraqi troop deployment was a provocative action and cannot be tolerated.

MS. ROBERTS: And the Russians?

SEC. PERRY: The Russians -- I speak with more confidence about the French because I spoke this morning with the French defense minister. I'm going to be speaking with the Russian defense minister tomorrow morning, so I don't have the same first-hand level of knowledge on that.

MS. ROBERTS: And one other partner in the coalition, the Turks, who were very helpful in allowing U.S. planes to take off from Incirlik (ph) Air Base during the Gulf War, and there's been some feeling that they would not be willing to do that should there be another military action.

SEC. PERRY: I would expect the Turks to be with us if we have an action against Iraq. I do not have first-hand knowledge. I have not talked with the Turkish defense minister as of this point.

MS. ROBERTS: The other military option that we heard in Dave Marsh's piece is the possibility of establishing the equivalent of a no-fly zone or a no-tank zone in the south, as there is in the north, a demilitarized zone. Is that a prospect, and would that be something the United States would have to permanently police?

SEC. PERRY: That's certainly a viable option. We are now conducting a no-fly zone south of 32, the 32nd parallel, which we do not allow Iraqi aircraft to fly. And we are enforcing that with a coalition air patrol. And we could conceivably extend that no-fly zone to include prohibition on certain kinds of ground equipment as well, and that would be a fairly -- I won't say simple, but a fairly straightforward thing for us to implement, to enforce that kind of prohibition.

MS. ROBERTS: But it would mean keeping troops in the area.

SEC. PERRY: Well, we have kept that southern watch -- that air patrol there has been there essentially since the Desert Storm. And it's a coalition

air force that has been patrolling the southern skies in Iraq. We might continue that for some number of years, depending on what develops in the situation.

MS. ROBERTS: Well, I want to talk to you about the cost of all of this and what happens if another hot spot should erupt in the world when we come back in just a moment.

(Announcements.)

MS. ROBERTS: We're back with Secretary of Defense William Perry.

Mr. Secretary, if we have 350 aircraft going in and tens of thousands of ground troops -- we're hearing upwards of 70,000, 50 {thousand} to 70,000 -- a lot of money aren't we talking about?

SEC. PERRY: Indeed. If we actually go forward with this full deployment and have to have it over there for some period of time, we're talking about billions of dollars, not hundreds of millions of dollars. Whether or not we have to expend that money depends on what happens on the ground. If indeed the Iraqis pull back their deployments, if we find that the situation is such that it's no longer threatening, then we will not have to make that full deployment and we're then talking about a very much smaller amount.

MS. ROBERTS: Does that then become part of the determination? I mean, when you sit there and you're trying to figure out exactly what Saddam Hussein is up to, do you say, "Well, gee, we hope he really has pulled back because we don't want to spend all this money"?

SEC. PERRY: It is not a consideration in what it takes to deter the action. We put forward whatever we think is necessary to deter. Nor does it affect our judgment in what it would take that if our deterrence fails, that we could defeat him quickly, decisively and with minimum casualties. That's not part of a calculation there. It does become part of a calculation, though, and consideration that we do not want to be pinned down in that area. We do not want to have to hold large numbers of troops there for a long time, because that is now a resource question. We cannot accept that and will not accept it.

MS. ROBERTS: So that militates toward action.

SEC. PERRY: Exactly.

MS. ROBERTS: And there was some thought -- and the president himself talked about this -- that maybe Saddam thought that because we were occupied in Haiti that he could pull this little maneuver. Is there -- are we now in as many places as we can be?

SEC. PERRY: If he thought that, of course, he was very wrong. The troops we have in Haiti are a very small part of the total forces we have. We have under 20,000 troops in Haiti. I think the number is about 17,000 today out of 1.6 million armed forces. So this is a very small part of our total forces. It had nothing to do with our ability to quickly and efficiently deploy quite a large force in the Mideast.

MS. ROBERTS: Now, suppose someplace else erupts. Suppose the North Koreans take a look and say, "Okay, the United States is busy in the western hemisphere, is busy in the Middle East. It's our turn to make a little trouble."

SEC. PERRY: Well, you can postulate five or six or seven crises at a time, and you begin to reach a stage where the resources are really badly strained. We do have resources dedicated to the western Pacific which we would use and are using. We already have 100,000 troops deployed in the western Pacific directed to, among other things, any threat of a military adventure from North Korea. If we did have military action in North Korea, we would need more than that. We'd have to deploy forces from all over the world in that area. Probably the biggest --

MS. ROBERTS: Is that something to worry about? I mean, do you worry that this sort of brings mischief-makers out of the woodwork?

SEC. PERRY: We do worry about that. That's why, in our bottom-up review, when we were laying out the foundations of our military force, we called for sufficient military forces to be able to deal with two what we call major regional conflicts nearly simultaneously on the theory that if we got tied up with one, some other mischief-maker might say, "This is an opportune time. This is a window of opportunity." So we have forces to do that.

The biggest conflict now, if they come too close together, is in our airlift and our sealift. We have airlift and sealift that would deliver the forces to one theater, and then they'd have to come back and deliver them to another. So that is the biggest area of conflict in the force now, but we have sufficient quantities of force to deal with two major regional conflicts in the world at once.

MS. ROBERTS: But at this point you don't expect that to happen.

SEC. PERRY: We do not expect that to happen. We fervently pray it will not happen.

MS. ROBERTS: And you think that -- we're just about out of time here, but do you think, given where we are tonight, that Saddam Hussein does pull

back shortly?

SEC. PERRY: I believe he will pull back, and shortly. I believe it will be a reflection of the deterrent effect of this very large military force we've put over there.

MS. ROBERTS: Thank you very much.